



## **Upgrading English Public Speaking Skills in Thai EFL Students through Imitating TED Talks Videos**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research investigates the enhancement of English public speaking skills among Thai EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students through imitating TED Talks videos. By applying Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis, the study integrates authentic materials for effective learning. A mixed methods approach, incorporating quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and observation was used to assess students' perceptions and improvements in speaking skills. Fifty-five students from a government university in Northeastern Thailand participated in activities involving watching, imitating, and recording their own videos posted in a Facebook group. Results show significant improvements in vocabulary, grammar, body language, and overall speech structure. Students reported increased confidence and more engaging presentations. Initial challenges included understanding diverse accents and reliance on scripts, which decreased with practice. The study underscores the benefits of selective imitation over full imitation, allowing students to maintain individuality while acquiring new skills. These findings suggest that TED Talks are a valuable resource in English language teaching, fostering both linguistic and communicative development, and highlighting

	<p>the importance of authentic materials and guided practice in language acquisition.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> TED Talks, public speaking, Thai EFL students, imitation, authentic materials.</p>
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## Introduction

In the modern era, English language communication skills, particularly speaking, are widely recognized as essential (Robert & Meenakshi, 2022). For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, effective speaking is especially important in contexts such as classroom presentations and public speaking engagements. Speaking English, particularly English public speaking, takes it to an even higher level of intensity, as public speaking not only enhances general communication skills but also promotes language proficiency by requiring students to organize their thoughts, use appropriate vocabulary, and deliver ideas clearly in front of an audience. Through public speaking, students actively practice pronunciation, fluency, and effective communication strategies, such as structuring their ideas clearly and persuasively, all of which are essential for achieving higher levels of English language proficiency. However, EFL students often face challenges in mastering these skills due to limited opportunities to interact with native or proficient non-native speakers. To address this, integrating authentic materials—such as recorded speeches—into language learning can provide students with real-world contexts, cultural exposure, and heightened motivation (Haryati et al., 2023; Khodjayeva, 2023). Authentic materials expose learners to natural language use, help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication, and encourage active engagement with the target language. These materials also introduce learners to diverse accents, speech patterns, and cultural norms, enabling them to develop a deeper understanding of English as it is used in global contexts.

This study focuses on using TED Talks, a widely accessible resource available on platforms like YouTube, as a tool to enhance English public speaking skills. TED Talks are renowned for their engaging delivery, diverse topics, and powerful communication techniques, offering students exemplary models for improving their speaking abilities. By studying and emulating these videos, students can gain insight into essential public speaking elements such as structuring their speeches, using appropriate body language, and maintaining audience engagement. Furthermore, TED Talks provide authentic linguistic input, showcasing language in context, which aids vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and pragmatic awareness. The use of TED Talks within online video platforms not only facilitates

access to high-quality examples of public speaking but also enables learners to repeatedly watch, analyze, and practice critical aspects of speaking, such as tone, rhythm, and gestures. By practicing public speaking with authentic materials like TED Talks, students may gain confidence in their ability to express themselves effectively in English, an essential skill for both academic and professional success.

At Mahasarakham University in Northeastern Thailand, midterm, final, and ongoing assessments of English speaking courses reveal several recurring issues. Many Thai EFL students struggle with key public speaking skills, including crafting engaging introductions, maintaining eye contact, using gestures, managing vocal tone, and expressing emotions naturally. Their speeches often sound rehearsed and do not feel natural or professional enough for effective communication. Research suggests that successful public speaking involves a well-structured approach, supported by evidence, and concludes with impactful statements (Angraini, 2016; Bilgin, 2022). However, these elements are frequently absent in the speaking performances of Thai EFL students. The qualities of TED Talks align well with these challenges. TED Talks provide real-world examples of effective public speaking, showcasing skills such as voice modulation, accentuation, non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures and eye contact), and audience engagement. By imitating these videos, students have the opportunity to enhance their English proficiency and develop the confidence to speak in front of large audiences. Authentic materials like TED Talks also allow students to observe and practice language as it is naturally used, encouraging the development of both fluency and accuracy while promoting critical thinking through exposure to diverse perspectives. Additionally, the availability of TED Talks on platforms such as YouTube can support blended and online learning approaches, integrating digital tools into traditional classroom methods to enhance public speaking courses. Despite these potential benefits, limited research has been conducted on the role of TED Talks in improving English public speaking among Thai EFL learners. Specifically, there is little exploration of how imitation of TED Talks impacts students' development of English public speaking. Therefore, this research aims to address these gaps by investigating Thai EFL students' perceptions of imitating TED Talks for public speaking practice and examining how emulating these performances improves their public speaking skills, as reflected in the following research questions:

1. How do Thai EFL students perceive the imitation of English language speaking from TED Talks videos?
2. How can Thai EFL students improve their public speaking skills by imitating English language speaking from TED Talks videos?

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## Literature Review

### English Speaking Skills

Developing English speaking skills is essential for effective communication in various personal, academic, and professional contexts. Proficiency in speaking involves mastering pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic use of language (Richards, 2008). Effective speaking skills enable learners to convey their ideas clearly and persuasively, fostering meaningful interactions and collaborations. These foundational skills directly relate to public speaking, which requires not only language proficiency but also the ability to structure and deliver speeches effectively. Research highlights that regular practice and exposure to authentic language input, such as listening to native speakers or engaging in real-world conversations, significantly improve speaking abilities (Brown, 2007). Moreover, public speaking specifically demands advanced skills like voice modulation, strategic use of body language and audience engagement, which can be developed through guided practice and imitation of effective models such as TED Talks (Nezhyva, 2023). Video-based resources provide learners with exemplary demonstrations of both language use and public speaking techniques, enhancing vocabulary, pronunciation, and presentation delivery. Furthermore, guided practice with feedback from instructors or peers encourages learners to refine their speaking and public speaking performance, building both competence and confidence (Harmer, 2015). Therefore, a comprehensive approach that combines structured learning, exposure to authentic materials, and constructive feedback can significantly enhance both general English speaking and public speaking skills.

### TED Talks as Authentic Learning Materials

Ruiz et al. (2015) emphasize that incorporating authentic materials into foreign language classrooms is essential because they make lessons more realistic and effective. They also note that teachers need to carefully consider the quality of input provided, as students' learning outcomes depend on it. TED Talks are considered one of the authentic learning materials that can be regarded as quality input, as they can yield various benefits to language learners when used in education, including socio-cultural, competence, language, and psychological aspects. Socio-cultural topics introduce students to global issues and encourage personal opinions and discussions. In terms of competence, TED Talks enhance various skills like listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Linguistically, they provide exposure to different accents and authentic language use. Psychologically, TED Talks foster a

positive learning atmosphere, reducing language anxiety and promoting effective communication, even with non-native speakers (Nezhyva, 2023). Additionally, TED Talks have an interesting feature called "interactive transcript," which combines reading and watching, allowing learners to enjoy and engage more fully with the learning process (Baeva, 2017; Duong & Nguyen, 2022). It can be seen that authentic materials reflect real English usage, closely tied to everyday communication, and can significantly improve students' language skills, Artha et al. (2020).

## **Impact of TED Talks on Public Speaking in the Digital Age**

In the digital age, TED Talks are an effective tool for demonstrating public speaking skills, as they inspire students to grow both as language learners and more confident public speakers. (Li et al., 2015). TED Talks offer global audiences the opportunity to observe and learn from expert speakers, enhancing their own public speaking skills. Furthermore, TED Talks are structured in a way that encourage speakers to deeply engage their audiences through compelling storytelling, visuals, and clear messaging, thereby setting a new benchmark for public speaking, emphasizing the importance of both content delivery and audience connection (Maria et al., 2018; Nguyen & Boers, 2019).

In addition to individual skill development, TED Talks also contribute to a collective understanding of global issues. As Nurmukhamedov (2017) points out, TED Talks cover a wide array of topics including technology, entertainment, design, business, science, and global issues. This exposure not only enhances students' content knowledge but also prepares them to speak confidently on various subjects, thus broadening their communication repertoire. Moreover, TED Talks provide a model for incorporating multimedia elements into presentations, which is increasingly important in the digital age where audiences expect visually engaging content (Masi, 2020; Tilwani et al., 2022).

## **The use of TED Talks to Enhance English Speaking and Their Role in English Language Education**

Using TED Talks significantly enhances English speaking skills among university students. According to Patty (2024), TED Talks offer engaging content that fosters motivation, alleviates anxiety, and enhances key aspects of English speaking skills, including fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary within diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, they also help improve English skills in terms of oral presentation techniques and vocabulary retention (Komekova, 2023; Kaçauni & Robo, 2024).

Furthermore, TED Talks serve as effective authentic learning materials, particularly in enhancing English listening skills among students (Gavenila et al., 2021). Research indicates that these engaging resources not only improve listening comprehension but also motivate learners through their captivating content. Studies show that students exposed to TED Talks demonstrate significant improvements in their listening abilities compared to those who do not use these materials (Novia et al., 2023; Thuy & Tuyen, 2024). The integration of TED Talks in EFL settings has been positively received, with students acknowledging their benefits in enriching general knowledge and fostering active participation (Upa & Muljiani, 2023). However, challenges such as comprehension difficulties and the need for guided instruction have also been noted (Thuy & Tuyen, 2024). Despite this, TED Talks serve as an invaluable resource for language educators seeking to enhance students' English listening and speaking skills while fostering greater engagement in the classroom.

### **Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis**

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis provide complementary frameworks for understanding how Thai EFL students can enhance their English speaking skills through TED Talks. Vygotsky's ZPD describes the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with the guidance of a more knowledgeable individual, emphasizing the importance of collaborative learning and mentorship (Vygotsky, 1978). In this context, TED Talks videos serve as advanced models of language use and public speaking skills that may initially lie beyond students' independent capabilities. Through guided practice and imitation, students can gradually internalize these skills. Similarly, Krashen's Input Hypothesis posits that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners are exposed to input that is just slightly beyond their current proficiency level, known as " $i+1$ " (Krashen, 1982). TED Talks provide comprehensible and authentic input, offering students exposure to natural language and challenging material that promotes incremental improvement. By selecting talks aligned with students' proficiency levels, they are encouraged to engage actively with the content, enhancing their language abilities in a meaningful context. Research has explored the relationship between these two theories. Dunn and Lantolf (1998) examined the comparability of Vygotsky's ZPD and Krashen's  $i+1$ , concluding that while both concepts address language development, they are incommensurable due to differing theoretical foundations. Vygotsky's framework emphasizes social interaction and collaborative learning, whereas Krashen focuses on individual

cognitive processes. Despite these differences, both theories emphasize the importance of providing learners with appropriate challenges and support to facilitate language acquisition.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Objectives**

The study aims to explore Thai EFL students' perceptions of imitating English-language speaking from TED Talks videos and how this practice can enhance their public speaking skills. It focuses on analyzing students' views on the effectiveness of imitation as a learning tool, as well as the challenges they face. Additionally, the study investigates how this method contributes to skill development in aspects of public speaking.

### **Participants and Settings**

The study involved a total of 55 student volunteers from a government university in Northeastern Thailand. The participants were aged between 18 and 22 years, and convenience sampling was employed as the sampling type. The participants enrolled in the courses English Listening and Speaking for Explanation and Communicative English, consisting of both English majors and non-English majors. The participants are first-year and second-year students and were classified as having English proficiency at levels B1 and B2, which indicates their ability to communicate in English for daily life and express opinions on various topics. Participants were selected based on their willingness to participate and their ability to speak English in sentences for 1-2 minutes on various topics. These students participated in activities on the university campus and online, where they engaged in both surveys and interviews. Additionally, participants were asked to record and post weekly videos in a private Facebook group featuring themselves giving a speech of 2-3 minutes in length over a period of 5-6 weeks. Students could choose interesting topics to speak about from TED Talks videos, whether from native or non-native English speakers. They were required to submit their chosen topics to the instructor, who is also the researcher, for approval, ensuring the topics were of an appropriate level while at the same time offering a reasonable challenge for each student. Students had the option of fully or partially imitating the speeches of the TED Talks videos. This setting provided an environment where students could practice, share, and receive feedback on their public speaking skills over time, enabling the researcher to assess any improvements through direct observation.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods to comprehensively address the research questions. Quantitative data was collected through closed-ended questionnaires distributed on-campus, designed to capture students' overall perceptions of the impact of TED Talks videos on their English-speaking skills. Responses were analyzed by calculating percentages, providing a clear and straightforward representation of the distribution of opinions among participants. The use of percentages enabled easy comparisons across different questions, highlighting trends and significant patterns in students' perceptions. This method also facilitated the presentation of findings in a format that is both accessible and interpretable for a broad audience, ensuring clarity in summarizing the effectiveness and influence of TED Talks videos on public speaking abilities.

The researcher designed the questionnaire items for the surveys and the interview questions. All 20 questionnaire items underwent the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) process, which was conducted by three experts in the field to ensure content validity. The IOC evaluation aimed to assess the alignment of each item with its intended objective. Based on the evaluations, all items received a Mean IOC score of  $\geq 0.67$ , indicating that they are valid for inclusion. Most items achieved a perfect score of 1.0, reflecting unanimous agreement among the experts. Two items, specifically items 14 and 20, received a Mean IOC score of 0.67, showing minor divergence among the experts but still meeting the validity threshold. These results confirm that the questionnaire is appropriately designed and aligns well with the objectives of the study. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews, conducted both on campus and online to suit participants' schedules. A total of 51 students participated, selected based on their willingness and availability. This interview method was chosen because it is flexible and allows for deeper exploration of participants' experiences while staying focused on the research goals. Semi-structured interviews balance structure and openness, ensuring that all participants are asked similar questions while also allowing for detailed, personalized responses. The interviews included twenty core questions that matched the questionnaire to confirm and validate responses. Additional questions were adjusted based on the situation and participants' feedback, and follow-up questions were added to explore interesting or unexpected answers. This approach provided a well-rounded understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives.

After the interviews, the transcripts were carefully coded to identify recurring themes, providing deeper insights into students' experiences and opinions. Additionally, video recordings of students' speeches, posted weekly

in a Facebook group, were observed and analyzed. These videos offered an opportunity to evaluate students' speaking skills in action, which were compared to the original TED Talks videos on similar topics. The participants were assessed on their ability to organize ideas with clear introductions, logical flow, and strong conclusions, as well as their topic relevance. They were also evaluated on their vocabulary usage, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation, including clarity and stress. Delivery aspects, such as body language, vocal variety and audience engagement were analyzed to determine their impact. Finally, overall confidence and the clarity of their message were examined. The rubric for evaluating English public speaking skills and scoring guide is shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1***Rubric for Evaluating English Public Speaking Skills and Scoring Guide*

Category	Criteria	Score (1-5)	Description
<b>Content</b>	<b>Organization:</b> Clear introduction, flow, and ending.	1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent	Ideas are well-organized with a strong opening, logical flow, and impactful conclusion.
	<b>Relevance:</b> Topic fits the purpose.	1 = Irrelevant, 5 = Highly Relevant	Speech is engaging, original, and aligns with the topic.
<b>Language</b>	<b>Vocabulary:</b> Use of varied, accurate words.	1 = Limited, 5 = Sophisticated	Demonstrates a wide range of vocabulary, using expressions effectively.
	<b>Grammar:</b> Correctness of sentences.	1 = Frequent Errors, 5 = Accurate	Speech has minimal grammar errors and shows command of sentence variety.
	<b>Pronunciation:</b> Clarity and stress.	1 = Hard to Understand, 5 = Clear	Words are pronounced clearly with appropriate intonation and stress.
<b>Delivery</b>	<b>Body Language:</b> Gestures and eye contact.	1 = Weak, 5 = Confident	Uses natural gestures, maintains eye contact, and engages the audience with expressions.
	<b>Vocal Variety:</b> Tone and volume.	1 = Monotonous, 5 = Dynamic	Speech is expressive, with varied pitch and volume to hold attention.
<b>Confidence</b>	<b>Presence:</b> Poise and assurance.	1 = Nervous, 5 = Confident	Appears relaxed, confident, and enthusiastic while speaking.
<b>Impact</b>	<b>Clarity:</b> Main idea is easy to understand.	1 = Unclear, 5 = Clear	The speech conveys a clear and persuasive message.

<b>Engagement:</b> Holds the audience's attention.	1 = Boring, 5 = Captivating	Connects with the audience through examples, humor, or stories, making the speech memorable.
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## Scoring Guide

- **40–50:** Outstanding – Excellent in all areas.
- **30–39:** Strong – Good performance with minor improvements needed.
- **20–29:** Adequate – Basic skills met, but several areas need work.
- **Below 20:** Needs Improvement – Significant effort required in most areas.

By combining questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and observations, this research utilizes triangulation to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. Questionnaires provide quantitative data that highlight trends and participants' perceptions with consistency across a large sample. Semi-structured interviews complement this by offering qualitative insights, allowing deeper exploration of participants' experiences and recurring themes. Observations of students' video-recorded speeches further validate the findings by capturing students' vocabulary usage, pronunciation, body language, and confidence, providing a tangible comparison to the original TED Talks videos. Observational data validates findings from the surveys and interviews by confirming the impact of TED Talks in practice. Together, these methods ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, reduce biases, and reinforce the credibility of the conclusions through cross-verification of data sources.

## Findings

### Findings from the Questionnaires

The data collected from questionnaires on students' perceptions of the imitation of English language speaking from TED Talks videos is summarized in Table 2. The survey consisted of 20 statements with responses from 55 participants. A 5-point Likert scale was employed, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, to gauge agreement levels.

**Table 2**

*Students' Perceptions of the Imitation of English Language Speaking from TED Talks Videos*

Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. TED Talks videos can help you learn English public speaking skills.	-	-	5.45%	27.27%	67.27%
2. TED Talks videos help you create an interesting talk.	-	-	3.64%	54.55%	41.82%
3. TED Talks videos help you improve your accent and pronunciation.	-	5.45%	18.18%	54.55%	21.82%
4. TED Talks videos help you improve your vocabulary and grammar.	-	3.64%	12.73%	72.73%	10.91%
5. TED Talks videos impact your overall English skills.	-	9.09%	14.55%	63.64%	12.73%
6. TED Talks videos help you get more confidence in speaking English.	-	-	3.64%	23.64%	72.73%
7. You can overcome your fear of public speaking in English after watching TED Talks videos for several weeks.	-	-	10.91%	58.18%	30.91%
8. You have problems listening to different English accents from TED Talks videos.	3.64%	5.45%	7.27%	38.18%	45.45%
9. You listen to TED Talks videos in your free time.	5.45%	20%	23.64%	36.36%	14.55%
10. You use some vocabulary and expressions from some TED Talks videos when you speak English in front of your class.	10.91%	7.27%	9.09%	65.45%	7.27%
11. You read scripts or subtitles when you listen to TED Talks videos on YouTube.	5.45%	12.73%	21.82%	40%	20%
12. You get some public speaking techniques from TED Talks videos.	-	-	7.27%	67.27%	25.45%
13. You understand the content of TED Talks videos	52.73%	36.36%	1.82%	5.45%	3.64%

when you listen to them just one time.

14. You improve the structure of your talk when speaking in front of the class more effectively after watching TED Talks videos several times.	-	-	5.45%	49.09%	45.45%
15. You imitate some aspects of TED Talks speakers when you speak in front of the class (such as gestures, body language, vocal delivery, accents, vocabulary, and expressions).	-	-	3.64%	52.73%	43.64%
16. When listening to TED Talks videos, you use a dictionary to find the meaning of new vocabulary and expressions.	-	12.73%	14.55%	60%	12.73%
17. It's important to use body language as shown in each TED Talks video.	-	-	1.82%	43.64%	54.55%
18. You are satisfied with learning public speaking in English from TED Talks videos.	-	-	5.45%	58.18%	36.36%
19. You prefer to imitate everything from TED Talk speakers when you practice your own speaking.	27.27%	32.73%	12.73%	16.36%	10.91%
20. You prefer to imitate only some aspects of TED Talk speakers when you practice your own speaking.	9.09%	12.72%	14.55%	29.09%	34.55%

The data from the questionnaire reveals insightful findings regarding the impact of TED Talks on English public speaking skills among participants. A significant majority (67.27%) strongly agreed that TED Talks helped them learn English public speaking skills, with an additional 27.27% agreeing with this statement. Similarly, 54.55% agreed and 41.82% strongly agreed that TED Talks made their talks more interesting. Pronunciation and accent improvement were noted by a combined 76.37%, though 5.45% disagreed. Vocabulary and grammar enhancement received agreement (agree and strongly agree combined) from 83.64% of participants, with 72.73% specifically agreeing.

When it comes to confidence, an overwhelming 96.37% agreed or

strongly agreed that TED Talks boosted their confidence in speaking English. Overcoming fear of public speaking also garnered positive responses, with 89.09% agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, some participants (45.45%) struggled with understanding different English accents.

Regarding habits, a mixed response was observed for watching TED Talks during students' free time, with only 50.91% agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. A high 72.72% reported using vocabulary from TED Talks in their public speaking, while 60% agreed they used subtitles to aid comprehension. Notably, only 9.09% found understanding TED content after a single listening to be easy, reflecting a significant challenge in comprehension.

Body language emerged as an important focus, with 98.19% of participants acknowledging its importance in public speaking. Participants also agreed they imitate aspects of TED speakers, such as gestures and body language (96.37%). Interestingly, only 27.27% preferred imitating everything from TED speakers, while a higher 63.64% preferred selecting specific aspects.

In summary, students' responses illustrate the effectiveness of TED Talks in enhancing public speaking skills, confidence, and specific elements like vocabulary and body language. However, challenges such as accent comprehension and individual differences in engagement highlight areas for additional support.

## **Findings from the Interviews**

The purpose of the interview was to gain more in-depth information about the participants' opinions regarding the imitation of English speech from TED Talks videos. After transcribing the data, the researcher coded and analyzed it to identify key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The recurring themes have been identified and categorized by topics from the interview content, as presented below.

### **Advantages of TED Talks for Upgrading English Public Speaking Skills**

Most students agreed that watching TED Talks significantly improved or upgraded their ability to speak English in public or in front of the class. They reported that their speeches or presentations became more engaging after learning and emulating various public speaking techniques. These techniques include effective use of body language, such as maintaining eye contact, employing facial expressions like smiling, and incorporating hand gestures. Additionally, students noted improvements in their vocabulary,

grammar, and speech structure, particularly in how they opened their speeches and made their speeches more interesting.

The responses from some student interviews are presented below.

#1 “By regularly watching and studying TED Talks, I greatly enhanced my public speaking abilities.”

#2 “TED Talks encourage me to speak English more naturally and professionally.”

#3 “I learned how to begin and end a talk effectively, and TED Talks videos help me deliver messages clearly and engagingly.”

#4 “TED Talks can help me learn English public speaking by improving my accent, vocabulary, expressions, grammar, transition words, and ways to act in public.”

#5 “I learned how to effectively use body language while speaking such as keeping eye contact, making facial expressions like smiles, and using hand gestures.”

#6 “TED Talks help with tone, gestures, and the organization of speech content, and each speaker has unique techniques. One technique that I really like is imagining the audience as vegetables when speaking in front of many people.”

#7 “I practice and remember new vocabulary every time I watch TED Talks and observe the different grammatical structures used by the speakers.”

#8 “They help create an interesting speech structure.”

#9 “I gained knowledge of voice pitch control, body language, and the avoidance of fillers like “um” and “ah.””

#10 “I learned techniques for introducing a topic before delving into the content to make the speech more engaging.”

#11 “TED Talks make my presentations more engaging, rather than stiff and uninteresting as before.”

## **TED Talks and Confidence in English Speaking**

Findings from student interviews on the impact of TED Talks on public speaking confidence revealed that most students have become more confident after watching TED Talks videos for a period of time. The majority found that adopting techniques from TED Talks speakers increased their

confidence in speaking publicly or in front of a classroom. Techniques that boosted their confidence include the use of body language, such as hand gestures and practicing in front of a mirror to ensure appropriate body language, as demonstrated in the TED Talks videos.

Some students gained more confidence due to the positive attitude exhibited by TED Talks speakers in each video. They mentioned that having professional examples to listen to and watch made them more confident in their own speaking abilities. Additionally, observing the speech structure from beginning to end helped them learn the patterns of speaking at different stages. This allowed them to emulate the techniques of skilled speakers, learning how to speak engagingly, control their tone, and entertain the audience. With these speaking elements, they felt more confident speaking publicly or in front of a class.

Regarding accents, most students initially felt insecure about their own accents, which often included a Thai influence. However, after seeing speakers from various parts of the world with diverse nationalities and accents from TED Talks videos, they gained confidence that their Thai-accented English could also communicate ideas effectively. This realization helped students overcome their embarrassment about speaking English with a Thai accent, and they became more confident in their English-speaking abilities.

The responses from some student interviews are presented below.

#1 “I have gained more confidence by practicing the use of body language, such as hand gestures, while rehearsing English speeches in front of a mirror, following the techniques demonstrated by TED Talk speakers.”

#2 “I found that most speakers in TED Talk videos convey a very positive attitude in their speeches, which fosters confidence in the listeners to be themselves. Listening to these TED Talk videos has progressively boosted my confidence.”

#3 “After listening to TED Talk videos for 3-4 weeks, I started to learn the patterns of speaking at various stages, from the introduction to the conclusion. This has increased my confidence in speaking in public or in front of a classroom.”

#4 “I have learned various methods to entertain the audience, which has increased my confidence in delivering speeches in public or in front of a classroom in multiple styles.”

#5 “Previously, I was embarrassed to speak English with a Thai accent. However, after watching several TED Talk videos, I have gained confidence in speaking English with a Thai accent. The videos feature speakers with a wide range of accents, not

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just American or British, yet they communicate as effectively as native English speakers."

## **TED Talks and Challenges with Accent Comprehension and Self-Directed Learning through TED Talks**

Interviews with students revealed that most of them initially struggled with English accents other than American English. Many students reported that British English and Indian English accents were difficult to understand, along with various other national accents. As a result, most students could not fully comprehend TED Talks videos on their first viewing and relied on reading scripts or subtitles to better understand the diverse English accents.

However, after several weeks of practicing with TED Talks videos, most students gradually became accustomed to the variety of accents. They realized that understanding English requires familiarity with multiple accents, and one cannot restrict oneself to only British or American English. They also recognized that speakers can use any English accent in the world, as long as the communication is clear and effective. This is consistent with Grant's (2017) assertion that non-native accents do not inherently hinder communication. Rather, effective interaction is primarily determined by the clarity of a speaker's pronunciation and their ability to convey meaning.

The primary techniques that helped students overcome difficulties in understanding diverse accents included repeated listening and following along with reading scripts or subtitles. Despite these strategies, most students still needed to use a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words from the scripts or subtitles. This process facilitated the learning of new vocabulary and expressions through watching and listening to TED Talks videos.

This method of learning can be considered a form of self-directed learning or autonomous learning because learners control their own pace of language acquisition until they achieve a clear understanding. Self-directed learning (SDL) and autonomous learning are closely related concepts that emphasize learners' independence and responsibility for their own education. SDL involves learners actively taking charge of their learning experiences, a crucial skill in various educational settings. This approach encourages critical thinking, flexibility, and the ability to set and achieve personal learning goals (Chen, 2024; Jain, 2024).

The responses from some student interviews are presented below.

#1 "Initially, I found it challenging to understand various English accents other than American. However, over time, I became accustomed to these accents."

#2 “I needed to listen to TED Talks multiple times to fully understand the content, especially when dealing with challenging vocabulary and accents.”

#3 “I found British and Indian English accents particularly difficult to understand.”

#4 “I used reading scripts or subtitles to aid comprehension of the diverse English accents presented in TED Talks.”

#5 “I learned that effective communication in English is not limited to any specific accent but requires clarity, effectiveness, and engagement.”

#6 “I used dictionaries to look up unfamiliar words from the scripts or subtitles, which facilitated learning new vocabulary and expressions.”

#7 “I felt more confident in using my Thai-accented English after seeing the wide range of accents used by speakers around the world.”

## Preference for Imitation of TED Talk Speakers

In this study, during the practical public speaking training sessions posted on the Facebook group, students were given the option to either partially imitate TED Talk speakers as much as they wanted or fully mimic the content, gestures, tone, accent, and body language of the speakers. The results from the interviews revealed that most students chose to imitate only certain aspects of the TED Talk speakers' presentations. For example, they mimicked the use of body language, such as hand gestures and eye contact, as well as certain vocabulary and expressions, and occasionally the accent. This indicates that students maintained their individuality and chose to preserve their unique style. Some students enjoy their Thai accent and have no intention of adapting it to an American or British accent. This reflects a fondness for their Thai identity and accent in speaking English, as long as they can communicate effectively with others. This is aligned with the assertion by Umera-Okeke & Ezekwe (2014) that maintaining identity in language education is essential, as it promotes a sense of community and national awareness among students.

A minority of students opted to fully imitate the TED Talk speakers. Full imitation involved replicating the tone, facial expressions, speech content, and body language exactly as the TED Talk speakers did. This included copying every word, gesture, and accent.

However, through in-depth interviews it was revealed that most students chose to partially imitate the speakers because full imitation is more

challenging. Full imitation requires memorizing the entire speech, mimicking all gestures, tones, and body language exactly, and imitating the speaker's accent, which can be particularly difficult if they are unfamiliar with the accent and rarely hear it.

Furthermore, the students who chose to fully imitate TED Talks speakers provided additional explanations for their choice. For example, they did not want to create their own content and preferred to practice the accent they admired from the speakers. They also wanted to practice using hand gestures, making eye contact, and entertaining the audience. Essentially, they aimed to replicate every aspect of the speaker's performance. By mastering these elements, they felt more confident in their speaking abilities.

The responses from some student interviews are presented below.

#1 "I like how TED speakers greet and introduce their talks, so I chose to imitate only these two aspects."

#2 "I prefer to imitate every aspect of the speaker. When I do it well, I feel much more confident speaking in public or in front of the class."

#3 "Imitating everything from TED Talks speakers allows me to practice many different parts of speaking elements, like vocabulary, expressions, gestures, body language, vocal delivery, and even accents."

#4 "After imitating TED Talks speakers in full for a while, I found that my pronunciation and American accent improved significantly."

#5 "I prefer to be myself and imitate only some aspects of speakers."

#6 "I think it is too difficult to copy everything exactly as the speakers do in TED Talks videos. So, I choose to imitate only the aspects that suit me and that I can do it well."

### **Findings from the Observation of Students' TED Talks Videos Recorded and Posted in the Facebook Group**

Among the 55 participants who engaged in public speaking imitation practice using TED Talks videos, all demonstrated significant improvement in their speaking abilities. When evaluated against the established speaking rubric, their scores ranged from 35 to nearly 50 points, reflecting substantial progress compared to their scores before the imitation practice, which were approximately 20–29 points. According to the rubric's scoring guide:

- **40–50:** Outstanding – Excellent in all areas.
- **30–39:** Strong – Good performance with minor improvements needed.
- **20–29:** Adequate – Basic skills met, but several areas need work.
- **Below 20:** Needs Improvement – Significant effort required in most areas.

These results indicate that the majority of participants achieved a high level of proficiency, with many falling into the "Outstanding" category and others in the "Strong" category, requiring only minor adjustments. This outcome emphasizes the effectiveness of the practice sessions and confirms that the results were highly satisfactory.

Observing students' imitations of TED Talks videos posted in the Facebook group, it was found that most participants chose to mimic certain aspects of the TED Talks speakers. This observation is consistent with the findings from the interviews, which indicated selective imitation rather than full imitation. In terms of body language and gestures, it was found that most students tried to use their hands while speaking English when recording videos of themselves. They practiced using gestures naturally, similar to TED Talks speakers. They also used facial expressions, such as slight smiles, tilting their heads, or moving their heads to match the content of their speech. Importantly, they did not look away from the camera and stood with a straight posture. This shows significant improvement compared to when they had not yet watched TED Talks videos, as observed from the speaking practice in class during the first 1-2 weeks. For language use, from observing the videos that students posted in the Facebook group after watching TED Talk videos for a while, it was found that students had more extensive vocabulary, including various expressions and forms of English usage compared to before. It was also noticed that students increasingly incorporated words and phrases from TED Talks videos into their own speech content. Regarding introduction and conclusion techniques, before watching TED Talks videos, students would introduce their topics and dive straight into the content without any engaging introductions to bridge into the subject matter. However, after watching TED Talks videos multiple times, students learned to make their introductions more interesting by imitating the speaking styles of TED Talks speakers. These techniques include starting with personal stories or anecdotes related to the topic, using quotes from famous people or experts in the field, asking thought-provoking questions, sharing interesting statistics or information, and even using fun stories or jokes to capture the audience's attention.

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## Discussion

### **Research Question 1: How do students perceive the imitation of English language speaking from TED Talks videos?**

Thai EFL students perceive the imitation of English language speaking from TED Talks videos as a highly beneficial and engaging learning method that enhances various aspects of their speaking skills. Based on interviews and survey findings, students noted that TED Talks provide authentic examples of public speaking techniques, such as the effective use of body language, engaging introductions, and clear speech organization. They appreciated the opportunity to observe and mimic advanced language use, which helped them acquire vocabulary, refine their pronunciation, and improve their grammatical accuracy.

Students reported that the selective imitation of TED Talks speakers allowed them to integrate new techniques while maintaining their unique speaking style, which aligns with Umera-Okeke & Ezekwe's (2014) assertion that preserving linguistic identity fosters a sense of cultural pride and personal authenticity. Additionally, students valued the exposure to diverse accents and speech styles, which broadened their understanding of global English variations and boosted their confidence in speaking with their own Thai-accented English. However, some students struggled with comprehension due to unfamiliar accents, emphasizing the importance of providing instructional scaffolding, such as pre-listening exercises and vocabulary preparation, to optimize learning outcomes (Thuy & Tuyen, 2024).

Overall, students perceived TED Talks as a dynamic and motivating resource that bridges the gap between classroom learning and real-world communication, offering practical insights into effective public speaking and enabling them to express ideas more confidently and professionally.

### **Research Question 2: How can students improve their public speaking skills by imitating English language speaking from TED Talks videos?**

From the findings of the survey, interviews, and observations, it was found that imitating English language speaking from TED Talks videos helps Thai EFL students improve their public speaking skills in several key ways. First, students gain insights into structuring their speeches more effectively, as TED Talks provide models for crafting compelling introductions, logical transitions, and impactful conclusions. By emulating these elements, students develop a better understanding of how to organize their ideas clearly and persuasively. Second, TED Talks expose students to essential delivery

techniques, such as voice modulation, pacing, and the use of non-verbal communication like gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact. These elements help students create engaging and professional presentations. Observations revealed that students who practiced imitating these techniques demonstrated significant improvements in their confidence, body language, and audience interaction. Furthermore, TED Talks offer authentic language input that facilitates vocabulary acquisition, listening comprehension, and the development of pragmatic awareness. Students reported incorporating newly learned vocabulary, expressions, and idiomatic phrases into their speeches, enhancing their linguistic range. The repetitive practice of mimicking diverse accents and intonation patterns also improved their pronunciation and fluency over time. Lastly, the selective imitation approach, where students chose specific aspects of TED speakers to replicate, empowered them to focus on areas that align with their personal learning goals and strengths. This approach not only made the learning process more manageable but also encouraged creativity and individuality in their speaking style. These improvements emphasize the value of TED Talks as a resource for developing public speaking skills.

Therefore, the findings of this study highlight that Thai EFL students perceive the imitation of TED Talks videos as a highly effective tool for enhancing public speaking skills. Drawing on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis, these perceptions can be critically examined within the framework of language acquisition theories as follows.

Vygotsky's ZPD emphasizes the importance of social interaction and guidance in bridging the gap between a learner's current ability and their potential. TED Talks serve as advanced models of proficient language use and effective public speaking, which students might initially find beyond their independent capabilities. Through guided imitation and observation, students align their learning with the principles of ZPD, internalizing skills such as structuring speeches, modulating tone, and incorporating gestures into their presentations. This aligns with the findings, as students reported improvements in speech organization, body language, and confidence after imitating TED Talks speakers. These enhancements are evidence of students operating within their ZPD, where they gradually master skills with support from high-quality input.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis complements this by suggesting that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners engage with input that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level ("i+1"). TED Talks provide authentic and challenging linguistic input, exposing students to advanced vocabulary, diverse accents, and natural intonation patterns. This aligns with students' feedback, as they incorporated newly learned vocabulary

and expressions into their speeches and reported improved pronunciation and fluency. The repetitive nature of mimicking TED Talks aligns well with Krashen's theory, as students are consistently exposed to meaningful, comprehensible input that gradually expands their linguistic and communicative abilities.

The balance between these theories also helps explain the selective imitation approach favored by students. As highlighted in the findings, students selectively replicated specific aspects of TED Talks speakers, such as gestures, expressions, and speech patterns, while maintaining their unique speaking styles. This practice reflects the ZPD's emphasis on tailored guidance and Krashen's notion of manageable input that respects individual learning trajectories. By choosing elements to imitate based on their personal strengths and learning goals, students optimize their engagement with "i+1" input, ensuring meaningful and incremental skill development.

However, the findings also reveal challenges that align with these theoretical frameworks. Students struggled with unfamiliar accents, which may have initially placed the input beyond their comprehensible range, hindering effective learning. This stresses the importance of instructional scaffolding, such as pre-listening activities and vocabulary preparation, to bridge gaps in comprehension and support learners in accessing the full benefits of TED Talks.

In summary, the integration of Vygotsky's ZPD and Krashen's Input Hypothesis provides a robust theoretical lens through which to understand the effectiveness of using TED Talks to enhance Thai EFL students' public speaking skills. These frameworks not only explain the significant improvements observed but also demonstrate the importance of providing structured, comprehensible input and opportunities for guided imitation. The findings reaffirm the value of TED Talks as a dynamic tool for developing public speaking and language proficiency when complemented by well-designed instructional support and feedback mechanisms.

Additionally, the results from interviews and observations of videos reveal that students showed significant improvement in their public speaking skills, regardless of whether they were English majors or non-English majors. This progress can be attributed to the application of the frameworks of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which effectively supported their learning process, regardless of their initial proficiency levels or academic backgrounds.

In conclusion, the results of this study align with previous research exploring the relationship between practicing speaking through TED Talks videos and English public speaking. TED Talks were shown to have a significant impact on enhancing speaking abilities, consistent with the findings of Farid (2019) and Arifin (2020).

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## Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

This study explored how TED Talks videos can enhance English public speaking skills among Thai EFL students, drawing on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Krashen's Input Hypothesis. The findings revealed improvements in vocabulary, grammar, body language, and speech organization, alongside increased confidence and the ability to deliver engaging presentations. Students benefited from authentic examples of advanced language use and public speaking techniques, with selective imitation allowing them to adopt new skills while retaining individuality. However, limitations such as a small sample size, short duration, and difficulties understanding diverse accents highlight the need for future research to examine long-term impacts and address these challenges. A positive outcome of this study is that the problems mentioned in the introduction—such as Thai EFL students having difficulty creating engaging introductions, maintaining eye contact, using gestures, managing vocal tone, and showing emotions naturally, as well as their speeches often sounding rehearsed and lacking a natural or professional feel—were successfully resolved. These improvements came after practicing public speaking by imitating TED Talks videos, showing that this approach had a strong impact on addressing these issues and improving students' public speaking skills.

In terms of pedagogical implications, TED Talks are a valuable resource for teaching English, offering authentic exposure to diverse accents, speech patterns, and non-verbal communication that enhance listening skills, vocabulary, and public speaking techniques. To address challenges in accent comprehension, teachers can incorporate pre-listening activities and vocabulary preparation. Lessons can focus on key aspects of speaking, such as pre-watching tasks to introduce vocabulary, pronunciation practice using TED clips and tools like voice recording apps, grammar exercises analyzing transcripts, and delivery techniques that mimic TED speakers' body language and vocal variety. Group projects, where students create TED-style talks integrate all these elements while fostering creativity and teamwork. These strategies make TED Talks a dynamic and effective tool for improving linguistic proficiency and communicative competence in public speaking.

## Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

This study had limitations that could impact the generalizability of its findings. The small sample size of 55 students limits the applicability of the results to other Thai EFL learners or educational contexts. Additionally, the short duration of 5-6 weeks provided limited insight into the long-term effects of using TED Talks to improve public speaking skills. A longer study

would help determine whether the observed improvements are sustained over time. Another issue was students' difficulty in understanding the diverse English accents represented in TED Talks, which may have hindered their overall learning experience. Although comprehension improved with practice, providing additional resources to assist with accent understanding could enhance the method's effectiveness.

Future research could explore how teachers can use TED Talks to improve key speaking skills such as vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and delivery. This includes studying the impact of pre-watching activities to introduce vocabulary, using TED Talks clips to practice intonation and stress with technological tools, and analyzing transcripts to develop grammar skills. Research could also examine the benefits of mimicking delivery techniques like body language and vocal variety, followed by peer feedback or video analysis. Additionally, studies might evaluate interactive group projects where students create and present TED-style talks.

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